

In July, 2013 Governor Martinez announced her administration is developing a statewide strategic veterans' cemetery plan to establish rural state veterans' cemeteries. The Lincoln-Otero Counties Veterans' Leadership Council supports this initiative to establish honorable final resting places for our nation's veterans and their dependents that are within a reasonable distance from their homes. Governor Martinez's plan is to submit applications for 3 to 4, 3 to 5 acre, cemetery locations to the Department of Veteran's Affairs, Washington, no later than July 1, 2014. The ideal location for these cemeteries are to have them within a 75 mile radius of where the veteran lives. With the large land mass of New Mexico the state will have to look at using a 100 to 150 mile radius to properly cover the state at this time. If the state could submit locations in the SE, SW, NE and NW quadrants of the state, this goal would be reached.

The Governor and the Secretary of Veterans' Services are conducting Town Hall meeting in communities throughout the state, none scheduled in Lincoln County, to both gain support and determine where the best locations would be. We feel that the Fort Stanton Cemetery located in Lincoln County should be submitted as the primary location in the southeast quadrant of New Mexico. Roswell, Alamogordo, Carlsbad and Hobbs have all indicated an strong interest in having a rural veteran's cemetery established in their area. We reinforce our belief that Fort Stanton Cemetery is ideal location for the following reasons:

- 1) There is already a cemetery at Fort Stanton that is open for burial of veterans and their dependents. It has been open for 114 years. First by the US Public Health Service and since 1953 by the state of New Mexico. The first veteran's burial was William H. Jefferies, USMC, buried August 15, 1918. There are almost 1600 burials of veterans, merchant mariners, staff and state clients at this time.
- 2) The state already owns this property.
- 3) This location has been under consideration as a state regional veteran's cemetery since 2000.
- 4) New Mexico has invested over \$180,000. in plans approved both by the state and the federal veterans departments. In 2006, Veteran's Affairs offered the state over \$3,000,000. to establish the improvements necessary and expansion of the current location, that state would have to agree to perpetual maintenance. The previous administration turned down this offer stating that its perception was that is was not a state responsibility to bury federal veterans. This application is still current in Washington.
- 5) The state has to approve 10% of the cost of the development of the cemetery and can recover this from the federal government with 1-2 years. In other words, no cost to the state.
- 6) Fort Stanton Cemetery has already researched and been approved to receive federal plot allowance of \$700.00 for veteran buried. This was also turned down by the previous administration. We can apply for burials within the past 24 months, thereby showing the cemetery can generate income to help pay for maintenance, etc.
- 7) A state approved DVS honor guard unit is in place to present funeral honors.
- 8) The federal VA has already approved separate government furnished markers for dependents. This is an exception to their policy of only veteran's markers in non-national cemeteries.

- 9) MOST IMPORTANT, Fort Stanton Cemetery is located within a 75 mile radius of both Alamogordo and Roswell (both cities wanting a cemetery) and if a 150 mile radius is considered, the whole veterans population of SE New Mexico is covered.

Thank you for letting me present this update on Fort Stanton Cemetery.